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SUBJECT: EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THE 62ND UNGA

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR JEFF DELAURENTIS
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B&D)

Summary and Introduction

¶1. (U) This cable was prepared by Ambassador James Gadsden, who served as Senior Area Adviser for Eastern European Affairs to the 62nd United Nations General Assembly.

¶2. (C) Summary: Most Eastern European states generally supported US priority objectives for the Fall session of the 62nd UNGA: adoption of the resolution condemning rape as an instrument to achieve military and political objectives; adoption of resolutions on the human rights situation in Iran, Burma, Belarus and the DPRK; resisting Palestinian resolutions widely supported by UN member governments; the appointment of US candidate David Walker to the Independent Audit Advisory Committee (IAAC), and focusing UN member states attention on excessive increases in the 2008/2009 proposed UN budget. This message assesses the impact of 1) the tendency of Eastern European states to align with EU member states on UN positions, 2) the interplay of regional sensitivities on UNGA voting decisions, and 3) the limits of Eastern European alignment with EU member states on UNGA issues on support for US positions. To maximize Eastern European support for US positions, we should 1) intensify efforts to find common ground with the EU, with which Eastern European states tend to align; 2) cultivate relationships with Eastern European officials throughout the year in New York, Washington, and capitals, thereby demonstrating US interest in their assessment of their strategic environment, and 3) explore, long before the next UNGA, ways in which Eastern European states could support our positions without jeopardizing their strategic interests. End Summary.

The Tendency to Align with EU Member States

13. (SBU) Three inter-related dynamics drive Eastern European states' UNGA voting. The dominant dynamic is the tendency to align with EU member states, except where their national interests lead them to choose another course. Perm Reps of new EU Eastern European states, such as Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania, together with aspirant Croatia, often state boldly that their top foreign policy priorities are NATO membership, EU membership, and participation in global affairs through the UN. For them, being a good new EU member means working to achieve consensus among EU member states on UN issues. These countries treat the EU and the UN as vehicles through which they can leverage influence in global affairs with leadership positions in either organization. The Croatian Perm Rep lobbied hard for Croatia's 2009 Security Council seat and was confident Croatia would win on the first round. Slovenia's Perm Rep, poised confidently to coordinate in New York EU member state positions on UN issues when Slovenia becomes EU Council President on January 1, 2008, is already laying the groundwork for Slovenia's bid for a Security Council seat in 2012 and a UNICEF Executive Board seat in 2008. Bulgaria soon will campaign to succeed Slovenia with a Security Council seat in 2010-2011. Substantive UNGA priorities for these states will remain human security, human rights, human social development, women's rights, HIV-AIDS, Millennium Development Goals, and climate change. Croatia is eager to contribute to UN reconciliation, peacekeeping, peace building, and police training efforts, areas in which it believes it can offer others the benefits of its experience. Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to emphasize humanitarian assistance in natural and man-made disasters.

14. (SBU) The tendency to align with EU member state positions is clear in the voting patterns of Iceland, which is not an EU aspirant, and states to the East that wish to join the EU. The Icelandic Perm Rep indicated privately that unlike in the past, Iceland no longer will follow the US consistently on foreign policy issues. It will instead align more closely with the EU. Eastern European countries such as Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Albania, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Georgia also cite EU membership as their long term foreign policy high priority and the UN as their vehicle for engaging in global affairs. On most issues, they too tend to align with EU member states on UN voting. The most helpful and approachable non-EU Eastern European states were Ukraine, Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, and Montenegro. They were least comfortable when the US and the EU could not find common ground, for example on the Palestinian resolutions.

15. (SBU) The Central European states, the Baltic States, Ukraine, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Moldova, especially grateful for the US role in their transition to democracy and market economy, are most comfortable when the US and the EU positions on UN issues mesh. Except for Turkey and Iceland, both of whom committed to other candidates before the US candidate was announced, most Eastern European states voted for David Walker for the Independent Audit Advisory Committee (IAAC). Once US negotiators developed a consensus rape resolution text, which EU states joined, most non-EU Eastern European states quickly did so as well. Most Eastern European states joined EU member states in voting for the DPRK and Burma human rights resolutions. Differences between EU and some Eastern European states over the Belarus and Iran human rights resolution complicated those states aligning with the EU.

Regional Sensitivities

16. (SBU) Regional Sensitivities form the second dynamic driving Eastern European states' UNGA voting. First among those are security and commercial relations. Armenia, for example, is a member of the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization, together with Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In addition, Armenia enjoys

beneficial trade relations with Belarus. For these reasons, Armenia voted "no" in committee and plenary on the Belarus Human Rights Resolution, while EU states and Turkey voted "yes." During the Belarus no-action vote, Armenia's Perm Rep went for coffee. Armenia objected strongly to current "GUAM" coordinator Azerbaijan's recent tabling of a draft resolution on protracted conflicts. The Azeri Perm Rep hinted that if the GUAM pushes this resolution forward, Armenia may re-examine its participation in the OSCE-sponsored talks on Nagorno-Karabakh. Although the Azeris tabled the draft this year, they expect it will be discussed in 2008. Ukraine is considering tabling during the 63rd UNGA a draft resolution on the 1932 famine, and the Perm Rep has requested the assistance of State Department legal advisors on language to avoid reference, even by implication, to "genocide." For completely different reasons, the Armenians and the Russians are both very sensitive about Ukraine's famine initiative. While Russia joined the consensus on the rape resolution and was an early supporter of the Walker nomination, Russia was not helpful on the country specific human rights resolutions. The Russians will pay close attention to UNGA reform discussions to ensure that UNGA reforms do not change what they see as the iron-clad, charter-based balanced relationship between the UNSC and the UNGA.

17. (SBU) A second regional sensitivity is relations with the Moslem world. For East European countries with Moslem domestic communities, such as Turkey, Azerbaijan, Albania, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the concern is the prospect of negative domestic repercussions of positions their governments might take on the Palestinian resolutions or on Iran. While EU member states tend to vote "yes" on some Palestinian resolutions and abstain on most, Turkey and Azerbaijan, also concerned about their image in the OIC, tend more consistently to vote "yes." Turkey chose not to participate in any voting on Iran. A third key sensitivity, especially for Armenia, is the diaspora throughout the Moslem world, but especially in Iran. Yerevan worries about the welfare of ethnic Armenians who for centuries enjoyed relatively privileged lives in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East, including freedom to practice their religion. A fourth consideration is dependence, especially for energy supplies and investment resources. Iran supplies natural gas to Armenia, a concern as winter approaches, and is building an oil refinery in Armenia which could generate considerable employment. Given these factors Armenia, in plenary, voted "no" on the Iran Resolution and "yes" on the no-action motion. Armenia abstained or was absent for the vote on the amendment proposed in plenary. Regional sensitivities such as these do challenge the EU's push for Europe to speak with one voice on global affairs.

The Limits on Aligning EU and Eastern European States Positions on UNGA Issues

18. (SBU) In an ideal world, the EU Council President would relish more opportunities to declare on most issues the preamble to his December 18, 2007 plenary statement opposing no-action motions on the Iran, Burma, and Belarus human rights resolutions: "I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process, the potential candidates Albania and Montenegro, the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Moldova align themselves with this statement(" In New York, the EU presidency coordinates positions among EU member states through weekly meetings of the EU Perm Reps, the head of the New York Council Secretariat Office, and the head of the European Commission's New York office. These meetings are supplemented by daily meetings of experts from member states missions and often from capitals as well. EU mission officials complain that they spend far more time in EU coordination meetings than they do at the UN.

19. (SBU) A Troika of the presidency, the council secretariat, and the Commission meets twice yearly with EFTA members states and less frequently with candidate states, states in

association arrangements, and other non-EU European states. More frequently, common EU positions and draft statements are simultaneously communicated electronically to EU and non-EU European Perm Reps together with an invitation to align with the EU. Informal channels, such as readouts from Nordic EU member states to the Icelandic and Norwegian Perm Reps augment the periodic Troika meetings and electronic communications with non-EU European states. The current head of the EU Council Secretariat's New York Office indicated that with the number and pace of EU coordination meetings and UN meetings, Council Secretariat officials in New York are simply not able to conduct extensive outreach to non-EU European missions. Now planning the future EU External Action Agency's New York office, he is already incorporating into those plans additional staff members dedicated specifically to outreach and improved coordination with non-EU European missions as well as with other UN regional groupings.

Recommendations

10.(C) The most helpful and approachable non-EU Eastern European states were Ukraine, Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, and Montenegro. They tended to co-sponsor the rape resolution, support Walker's election, and vote with us on the four country specific human rights resolutions. Cultivating relationships with them throughout the year in New York, in Washington, and in capitals and demonstrating US interest in their assessment of their strategic environment would enhance the likelihood of their support for our positions during the next UNGA. With Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, we should explore ways in which those states could support our positions without jeopardizing their strategic interests in energy supplies, investments, trade, image in the OIC, repercussions in domestic Moslem communities, and the welfare of the diaspora in the Moslem world. In this context, urging "going for coffee" during important committee or plenary voting on Iran or on Palestinian issues, on which regional sensitivities are in play, might be a more effective initial US approach than pressing for a "yes" or a "no" vote or even for an abstention, which these countries have demonstrated they are politically not prepared to deliver.

Khalilzad